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SUBJECT: PM MALIKI ADDRESSES THE NAC AND CALLS FOR EXPANDED
TRAINING MISSION

Classified By: CDA Richard G. Olson for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY. On Thursday, April 17, Iraqi Prime Minister Maliki urged the North Atlantic Council to extend and expand the mission of the NATO Training Mission-Iraq (NTM-I). Maliki stressed that Iraq needs to develop the security structures required to recruit, train, and maintain the Iraq Security Forces (ISF) on "land, sea, and air." Referring specifically to the fight on terror, he said the most important step is to secure the country's borders with a strong police force capable of using the latest technology available, a goal NTM-I could help achieve. The Prime Minister also expressed his desire to see Iraq's relationship with NATO evolve into one of equals, with each partner helping the other achieve its objectives in the region. END SUMMARY.

NATO Training Mission) Iraq

¶2. (C) PM Maliki thanked NATO Allies for their assistance to NTM-I and their decision at the Bucharest Summit to extend the mission. He said while significant progress has been made in developing Iraqi security structures and institutions, more work needed to be done. He urged Allies to expand NTM-I to all branches of the military, saying that training and education were vital to modernizing Iraq's armed forces. (Note: Iraqi Defense Minister Abdul Qader al-Obeidi made similar points on April 16 to selected PermReps and members of the NATO International Staff.)

¶3. (C) Regarding specific training requests for NTM-I, the Prime Minister emphatically stated that border security was a priority for his government. He argued only well trained forces, using the latest in technology, would be able to control Iraq's 3200 kilometer border. Another priority was assistance to end the arms smuggling that occurs around the country. He also called for greater police training and asked that the gendarmerie training conducted by the Italian carabinieri be expanded. Maliki reported that a carabinieri-trained National Police battalion had acquitted themselves very well in the recent Basrah operations, adding that he was personally grateful for the NATO training they had received; a comment both welcomed and reinforced in many PermRep's interventions.

ISF: The Key To A Better Future

¶4. (C) Maliki said that the increased effectiveness of the ISF in establishing the rule of law was demonstrable: sectarian killings were down 85 percent, car bombings were down 90 percent, and IEDs incidents were down 70 percent. Maliki argued that the increasingly non-sectarian nature of the ISF had played a key role in this success, resulting in a truer partnership between the people and their security forces. As an example, he cited the closer relationship between the ISF and local tribes in areas such as Anbar province. Maliki also said that this success had given the people of Iraq a reason to hope for a brighter future, with markets and schools returning to life.

Fighting Terrorism

¶5. (C) Maliki said that ISF and the Multi-National Coalition had made significant progress in unraveling Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) networks. He said that because terrorists coordinated their activities internationally, democratic nations must also globally coordinate their actions to fight terrorism.

Basrah: No Time To Wait

¶6. (C) Describing Basrah as a city that had fallen under the control of armed militias and criminal thugs, Maliki argued that his government's recent operations in the southern city had been necessary and could not have been delayed. "The operations were strictly about returning law and order to the streets of Basrah; it was not a political battle, it was not a religious battle, it was a battle to restore security," he

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said. Maliki said that disarming militias was his highest law and order priority. Maliki argued that the operations in Basrah had been successful in that government forces had taken control of the strategically important port facilities and nearby oil distribution system.

Maliki Sidesteps Iran Question

¶7. (C) When Ambassador Nuland and several of her colleagues asked Maliki about Iran's involvement in Iraq, Maliki did not answer the question directly. On a number of occasions he glancingly referred to "external influences," and he said that Iraq would not tolerate "external interventions." He also made the observation that the "wars and adventures" of the previous regime had left Iraq with certain burdens in regard to its neighbors.

Elections

¶8. (C) In response to a question from the Spanish PermRep, Maliki reported that provincial elections will be held on October 1. He reported that the Iraqi Political Committee for National Security (PCNS) had decided to bar the participation of political parties with active militia arms, stressing the importance of this step to reduce the role of militias in Iraqi political life. He said that his government had invited international observers, such as from the EU, to witness the electoral process. Maliki underscored the importance of the elections to the Iraqi people and vowed not to let them down.

De-Baathification Reform

¶9. (C) In responding to several questions by PermReps, PM Maliki discussed the recently passed De-Baathification Reform Law) known formally as the "Accountability and Justice Law". He said that the law draws a distinction between the vast majority of former Baath party members who were forced to join the party in order to continue their studies, buy a house, or get a job and the relatively few former Baath members who had in fact committed crimes. Pointing out that

many senior Iraqi military officers had once been in the Baath Party, Maliki said that the new law would play an important role in reintegrating people in the former group back into Iraqi society. At the same time, he made clear that the Iraqi constitution prevented the Baath Party from ever again playing a role in Iraqi politics

PermRep Interventions

¶10. (C) The overwhelming response from PermReps was positive and supportive. PermReps stressed that Iraq had the responsibility to tell NATO what it needs, adding that Allies would then consider these requests. They also noted that NATO's new structured cooperative framework with Iraq be carried out in the spirit of "joint ownership." SYG de Hoop Scheffer added that NATO's relationship with Iraq was a "partnership moving forward with mutual respect."

¶11. (C) Ambassador Nuland said that the evolving NATO-Iraq relationship would lead to "a partnership of equals." She said that NATO Allies and Iraq shared the common goals of spreading democratic values, fighting terror, and eliminating weapons of mass destruction. She argued that these shared goals would be the basis of the "living partnership" between NATO and Iraq, a partnership that must endure, strengthen, and deepen. She called for an enhanced and more frequent dialogue between Iraq and NATO.

¶12. (C) Italian PermRep Stefanini termed Maliki's visit a "launching pad" for NATO's relationship with Iraq, a phrase repeated by a number of others. Stefanini stressed the importance of political dialogue in this relationship and also said that his country was ready to do more to help the Iraqi people. He announced that, on April 20, former Italian PermRep Moreno would lead a conference in Iraq on international humanitarian law.

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¶13. (C) The Turkish PermRep also struck a strong, positive tone, saying that his country valued the cooperation it has with Iraq. He drew particular attention to increased cooperation between the two governments in the fight against PKK terrorism. He said the ISF have made a point of reaching-out to the Turkish military of late, and the Turks want this to continue. The Turkish PermRep stated that NTM-I has been a success, but that its mission could be enhanced further to include subjects such as border security training.

¶14. (C) The Polish PermRep announced that his country was making plans to add more troops to NTM-I, as did the Bulgarian PermRep. The UK PermRep observed that the relationship between NATO Allies and Iraqi is symbiotic and beneficial to both sides: "the UK military has been transformed as it has helped the Iraqi military to transform."

¶15. (C) The French and Belgians sounded the only sour notes, although their interventions were couched in such a manner that their meaning likely escaped Maliki. The French tied future NTM-I training activities to those already approved in the OPLAN, a subtle way to rehash old procedural battles at NATO HQ. The Belgians said that future NATO cooperation is dependent upon an improved security situation, "a sine qua non for their support." The Germans did not intervene at all.

OLSON